

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8290

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USOECD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OECD, ASEC
SUBJECT: OECD FIRE AND ITS AFTERMATH

REFS: (A) PARIS 8140; (B) PARIS 7589; (C) PARIS 7579;
(C) PARIS 7571; (E) PHOTOS FORWARDED BY HAND
MARCH 3 TO RPE; (F) FLOOR PLAN FORWARDED BY
HAND MARCH 6 TO RPE

SUMMARY: AT 10:20 P.M. ON MARCH 1, A SURFACE FIRE
SPREAD QUICKLY THROUGH THE 15,000 SQUARE FEET LEASED BY
USOECD FROM OECD ON THE FIFTH FLOOR IN A SIX-STORY

MODERN OFFICE BUILDING. THE US-LEASED SPACE IS TEN
PERCENT OF THE TOTAL SPACE IN THE BUILDING. THE FIRE
RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF THE MARINE GUARD ON DUTY AND
THE DESTRUCTION BY FIRE OR SMOKE OF THE OFFICES. THE
DOCUMENTS IN SAFES WERE UNHARMED. THE CAUSE OF THE
FIRE IS STILL UNDETERMINED, BUT EXPERT CONSULTANTS
AGREE THAT THE FIRE HAD TO HAVE SMOLDERED FOR SOME
TIME BEFORE IT BROKE OUT AND SPREAD AT EXTRAORDINARY
SPEED, ACCELERATED BY COMBUSTIBLE MATERIALS. THE
LIMITED AMOUNT OF OXYGEN AVAILABLE LED TO A SURFACE
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FIRE, NOT A DEEP FIRE. UNFORTUNATELY, THE MARINE
GUARD, SGT. ROMERO, SEEMS TO HAVE FIRST TRIED TO
CALL IN AN ALARM AND TO PUT THE FIRE OUT, BY WHICH
TIME IT WAS TOO LATE FOR HIM TO ESCAPE, LEADING TO
HIS DEATH. PUBLICITY HAS BEEN MINIMAL AND NO NEWS
PHOTOS WERE PERMITTED.

THIS REPORT IS IN THREE PARTS: (I) RESUMPTION OF OPERATIONS, (II) IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREVENT OR MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF ANY FUTURE FIRES, AND (III) CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS RELATED TO THE FIRE ON MARCH 1-2. WE NOW HAVE MANY FIRST-HAND REPORTS WHICH, ALONG WITH MY OWN RECOLLECTIONS, PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR THIS CABLE.

IN THE AFTERMATH, MY IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES ARE TO ASSURE UNINTERRUPTED OPERATIONS; DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE TEMPORARY SPACE INTO WHICH TO MOVE; AND LASTLY, ANALYZE THE FIRE TO ESTABLISH WHAT ARE THE MINIMAL, FIRE-PREVENTION STANDARDS WE MUST OBSERVE, AND WHAT CHANGES MUST BE MADE IN SECURITY PROCEDURES IF WE ARE TO MOVE BACK TO REHABILITATED OFFICES IN THE OECD BUILDING.

WASHINGTON GUIDANCE IS REQUESTED ON THREE IMPORTANT POINTS: (1) TO PROVIDE MAXIMUM FIRE PROTECTION OF THE LIVES OF U.S. EMPLOYEES, WE ARE ADVISED THAT WE MUST REQUIRE OECD TO BRING THE ENTIRE BUILDING UP TO COMPLIANCE WITH U.S. SAFETY STANDARDS.

(2) ALTERNATIVELY, SHOULD WE ACCEPT A "TEN PERCENT SOLUTION" IN WHICH OECD WOULD BRING ONLY USOECD QUARTERS INTO COMPLIANCE WITH U.S. SAFETY STANDARDS?

(3) WHICH SAFETY STANDARDS, IF ANY, SHOULD BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONSIDERED SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION AND POSSIBLE WAIVER?

EMBASSY PARIS CONCURS IN THIS MESSAGE. END SUMMARY

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I. RESUMPTION OF OPERATIONS

A. IMMEDIATE STEPS

BEGINNING THE MORNING OF MARCH 2, NECESSARY OPERATIONS WERE RESUMED AS FOLLOWS: CABLE RECEIPT AND TRANSMISSION WERE TRANSFERRED TO EMBASSY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER BEGINNING 0800, PER REF. D. AT 0900 WE BEGAN OPERATING OUT OF TWO CONFERENCE ROOMS AND SEVERAL SMALL OFFICES IN THE SECOND BASEMENT OF THE OECD OFFICE BUILDING. ALL SUBSTANTIVE SECTIONS BEGAN OPERATING AT REGULAR OPENING TIME IN ONE CONFERENCE ROOM, USING SAFES SUPPLIED BY THE EMBASSY TO STORE CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS. THE FRONT OFFICE AND CENTRAL FUNCTIONS OCCUPY A SECOND CONFERENCE ROOM, WHICH SERVES AS AN OPERATIONS CENTER. A SMALL OFFICE WAS SET ASIDE FOR THE USE OF VISITING WASHINGTON OFFICIALS.

B. TEMPORARY QUARTERS

EMBASSY AND OECD IMMEDIATELY BEGAN A SEARCH FOR SUITABLE QUARTERS TO RENT DURING RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD. OUR USOECD PRESENT SPACE IS ABOUT 15,000 SQUARE FEET, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND IF WE ARE UNABLE TO OBTAIN ONE CONTIGUOUS BLOCK OF SPACE OF THAT SIZE, OPTIONS FOR VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH TO DIVIDE OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED TO BE USED IF NECESSARY. THE EMBASSY AND OECD SECRETARIAT ARE ACTIVELY PURSUING SEVERAL RENTAL POSSIBILITIES.

C. FULL COOPERATION

SECRETARY GENERAL VAN LENNEP SHOULD BE THANKED FOR THE KEENNESS OF HIS PERSONAL INTEREST, HIS SYMPATHY FOR THE DEATH OF THE MARINE GUARD, AND FOR THE SPEED AND GENEROSITY OF OECD ASSISTANCE. AMBASSADOR HARTMAN, MINISTER GAMMON AND ADMIN PARIS DESERVE THE SAME. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT MINISTER KATZ AND MR. KORP PERFORMED OUTSTANDINGLY, BOTH AT THE FIRE AND IN ASSURING CONTINUING, UNINTERRUPTED OPERATIONS. OUR

MISSION PERSONNEL REPORTED FOR WORK AS USUAL ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 2 AND WENT ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS IN THE IMPROVISED QUARTERS WITHOUT FURTHER ADO.
D. TEMPORARY QUARTERS IN PREPARATION OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETINGS

I AM CERTAIN THAT THE UNFORTUNATE FIRE WILL NOT DIMINISH THE THOROUGHNESS AND QUALITY OF OUR PREPARATION FOR MAJOR MEETINGS. IT WILL SIMPLY MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT AND CAUSE INCONVENIENCE. THIS CAN BE MITIGATED BY A RAPID DECISION TO RENT ADEQUATE TEMPORARY OFFICE SPACE; PROMPT, EXPERT DECISIONS ON MEASURES TO PREVENT RECURRENCE THAT REQUIRE CHANGES IN SPECIFICATIONS PRIOR TO RECONSTRUCTION; AND ALLOCATION OF ADEQUATE FUNDS. STRUCTURAL RESTORATION COSTS WILL BE COVERED BY OECD INSURANCE.

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IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE DAMAGE MAY PROVE TO BE LESS THAN TOTAL AND THAT A PORTION OF THE FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT CAN BE REHABILITATED. THE FIRE EVIDENTLY SPREAD EXTREMELY QUICKLY AND IN MANY AREAS BURNED ONLY A VERY THIN LAYER OF PAINT, VARNISH, AND FABRIC WALL COVERING ON THE WALLS AND PAINT ON THE CEILINGS. THE WOOD PANELS THEMSELVES DID NOT BURN THROUGH EXCEPT IN RARE CASES BECAUSE OF THE EXTREME HEAT. SMOKE PENETRATED EVERY ROOM, CAUSING SMOKE DAMAGE. ALL HORIZONTAL SURFACES ARE COVERED BY A LAYER OF CARBONIZED MATERIAL.

E. SECURITY

FORTUNATELY, ALL SAFES AND DOCUMENTS APPEAR TO BE UNDAMAGED. SECURITY IN THE DAMAGED AREA HAS BEEN FULLY MAINTAINED THROUGHOUT AND ADEQUATE SAFE STORAGE PROVIDED IN OUR PRESENT SPACE FOR THE STORAGE OF DOCUMENTS UP TO AND INCLUDING CONFIDENTIAL CLASSIFICATION. SECRET AND TOP SECRET DOCUMENTS ARE RECEIVED FROM AND RETURNED TO THE EMBASSY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER DAILY.

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II. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF INTERIM FIRE- PREVENTION PROCEDURES

A SPECIAL INVESTIGATION BY AN EXPERT, U.S. CONSULTANT, MICHAEL LANDER, OF THE REASONS FOR THE EXTRAORDINARILY RAPID SPREAD OF THE FIRE AND THE ENTRAPMENT OF THE MARINE GUARD HAS BEEN REQUESTED AND HAS BEEN MADE. THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OECD ALSO HAS RETAINED JACQUES FRANCHESCHI, INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT, PARIS, AND ALAN PARNELL AND PETER BRIGHAM OF BRIGHAM POLLOCK CONSULTANTS IN LONDON TO INVESTIGATE THE FIRE. THE IMMEDIATE IMPLICATIONS OF THE USOECD FIRE COULD BE VITAL, NOT ONLY TO THE APPROXIMATELY 60 U.S. EMPLOYEES WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN IN THE BUILDING HAD THE FIRE HAPPENED DURING NORMAL WORKING HOURS, BUT ALSO TO THE 400-500 OECD EMPLOYEES WORKING IN THE SAME BUILDING. THE ENTRAPMENT OF SGT. ROMERO EVIDENCES ONE SERIOUS IMPLICATION--AN INHERENT CONFLICT OF INTEREST BETWEEN PROVIDING ADEQUATE EGRESS FOR PEOPLE IN THE EVENT OF FIRE AND SECURITY AGAINST HOSTILE INTRUSION. THE NEED FOR READILY USABLE EXITS IS UNDERSCORED. ANOTHER SERIOUS IMPLICATION RELATES TO STANDARDS FOR STRUCTURAL DESIGN AND THE USE OF FLAMMABLE MATERIALS

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IN THIS BUILDING AND IN ALL OTHER USG-OCCUPIED
QUARTERS WORLD-WIDE.

NO ONE HAS FOUND EVIDENCE OF CRIMINAL ACTION.
MR. LANDER BELIEVES THE FIRE SMOLDERED FOR HOURS AND HOURS BEFORE IT ACTUALLY STARTED. THIS ACCORDS WITH REPORTS OF A BURNING ELECTRICAL SMELL BY U.S. MISSION

PERSONNEL AROUND 7:30 P.M. HEAT AND TOXIC, FLAMMABLE GASES MAY HAVE BEEN BUILDING UP IN THE CEILING SPACE THROUGHOUT THE FLOOR, WHICH ONLY NEEDED IGNITION TO REACH COMBUSTION LEVEL.

IN MY OPINION, THE PRECIPITATING INCIDENT THAT MAY HAVE IGNITED THE FIRE IS NOT AS IMPORTANT AS IT IS TO PAY THE UTMOST ATTENTION TO THE SPEED WITH WHICH THE FIRE RACED THROUGH THE BUILDING CORRIDORS (ABOUT 90 LINEAL METERS) AND JUST BELOW CEILING LEVEL, IN WHAT MAY HAVE BEEN AS LITTLE AS 10-15 MINUTES FROM THE TIME THE FIRST HEAT SENSOR WENT OFF. THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE INFLAMMABLE WALL COVERING, VARNISH AND PAINT ON THE WALL, PAINT ON THE CEILING, PLASTIC LIGHT COVERS, SYNTHETIC CURTAINS, ETC., HELPED CAUSE THE FIRE TO RACE THROUGH THE MAIN BUILDING CORRIDOR, GENERATING A SELF-ACCELERATING, HIGH DEGREE OF HEAT AND CAUSING LARGE AMOUNTS OF SMOKE AND AIR TOXICITY. THE RAPID SPREAD OF THE FIRE WAS CAUSED IN PART BY SOME PRE-HEATING OF THE AIR SPACE BETWEEN THE CEILING AND THE CEMENT SEPARATING THE FIFTH AND SIXTH FLOORS. CHIEF LEJENDRE, OF THE PARIS FIRE BRIGADE, SAID THAT, IN HIS OPINION, THE FIREMEN DID NOT PUT OUT THE FIRE--IT BURNED ITSELF OUT IN A MATTER OF MINUTES--AND THAT THE EFFORTS OF THE FIREMEN WERE CONFINED TO ELIMINATING THE SMOKE AND POISONOUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FUMES GENERATED BY WHAT WAS ESSENTIALLY A FLASH SURFACE FIRE. A LIMITED SUPPLY OF OXYGEN PREVENTED A DEEP FIRE. IT SHOULD BE ADDED THAT HEAT PENETRATION TO THE SIXTH FLOOR WAS SUFFICIENT TO BUCKLE THE FLOOR. IF THE FLOOR MATERIAL HAD BEEN COMBUSTIBLE, A FIRE WOULD HAVE OCCURRED ON THE SIXTH FLOOR, TOO.

OUR RECENT TRAGEDY LEADS ME TO STRONGLY RECOMMEND SEVERAL INTERIM PREVENTION PROCEDURES FOR IMMEDIATE DECISION. THE FIRST AND PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT IS THE RECONSIDERATION AND REVISION OF MARINE INSTRUCTIONS. THIS SHOULD INCLUDE GREATER ORIENTATION WITH THE PHYSICAL LAYOUT OF THE BUILDINGS THEY GUARD AND FORMAL INSTRUCTIONS ON FIRE-PREVENTION MEASURES, INCLUDING THOROUGH FAMILIARITY WITH SENSORS AND EQUIPMENT. KNOWLEDGE OF THE LOCAL LANGUAGE ALSO HELPS IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION.

I FURTHER RECOMMEND THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT INSIST ON COMPLIANCE WITH MINIMUM U.S. FIRE PREVENTION STANDARDS. THE U.S. MISSION, WHEN RECONSTRUCTED, MUST MEET U.S. SAFETY PRACTICES. SOME OF THESE ARE THE MEASURES LISTED BELOW:

- INSTALLATION OF SMOKE DETECTORS THROUGHOUT THE BUILDING--"COMPLETE AREA COVERAGE;"
- REWIRING THE ENTIRE FLOOR ACCORDING TO NATIONAL ELECTRICAL CODE (NED) STANDARDS;
- INSTALLATION OF AN AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM;

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- INSTALLATION OF EXIT DOORS EQUIPPED WITH PANIC EXIT HARDWARE AND DOOR CONTACT ALARMS TO PRECLUDE THE USE OF DEADBOLTS AND PADLOCKS;
- EMERGENCY, STANDBY POWER FOR ILLUMINATION IN CASE OF COMMUNAL POWER FAILURE;
- ESCAPE LADDERS;
- INSTALLATION OF FIRE-RESISTANT INTERIOR FINISHINGS, INCLUDING PANELING AND PAINT;
- INSTALLATION OF FIRE WALLS AND DOORS ON THE FLOOR AND AROUND THE STAIRWELLS.

IN ADDITION, CERTAIN COMMON-SENSE PRACTICES CAN BEGIN IMMEDIATELY. THESE INCLUDE:

- IMPLEMENTATION AS STANDARD OFFICE PROCEDURE THE CLOSING OF ALL OFFICE DOORS TO CORRIDORS WHEN OFFICES ARE VACATED EACH EVENING;
- MORE FREQUENT FIRE DRILLS.

THE ABOVE MEASURES SHOULD ALSO BE APPLIED TO OECD AS A WHOLE. IF THESE MINIMAL FIRE-PREVENTION STANDARDS ARE MET ONLY IN THE U.S. MISSION ON THE FIFTH

FLOOR AND NOT ON ALL SIX FLOORS OF THE BUILDING WE
OCCUPY, THE IMPLICATION IS ONLY PARTIAL SAFEGUARDING OF
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U.S. PERSONNEL AGAINST FIRE. SHOULD WE INSIST ON
MINIMAL COMPLIANCE WITH FIRE STANDARDS THROUGHOUT THE
OECD COMPLEX BEFORE WE DECIDE TO MOVE IN AGAIN?

IN SUMMARY, WE NEED DIRECTION FROM WASHINGTON ON
THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC POINTS:

(1) TO PROVIDE MAXIMUM FIRE PROTECTION OF THE
LIVES OF U.S. EMPLOYEES, WE ARE ADVISED THAT WE MUST
REQUIRE OECD TO BRING THE ENTIRE BUILDING UP TO COM-
PLIANCE WITH U.S. SAFETY STANDARDS.

(2) ALTERNATIVELY, SHOULD WE ACCEPT A TEN PERCENT
SOLUTION IN WHICH OECD WOULD BRING USOECD QUARTERS INTO
COMPLIANCE WITH U.S. SAFETY STANDARDS?

(3) WHICH SAFETY STANDARDS, IF ANY, SHOULD BE
CONSIDERED SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION AND POSSIBLE WAIVER?

AMBASSADOR HARTMAN CONCURS IN THESE FINDINGS.

IN SUPPLYING DIRECTION, THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD
BEAR IN MIND THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE OECD STAFF
ASSOCIATION MAY BRING PRESSURE ON OECD SHOULD OECD
ITSELF BE RELUCTANT TO COMPLY ON ITS OWN INITIATIVE
WITH RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED FROM ITS OWN EXPERTS
(WHICH WE THINK WILL BE SIMILAR TO THOSE OF MR. LANDER).
DEPARTMENT WILL ALSO NO DOUBT CONSIDER
APPLICABILITY TO U.S. PERSONNEL OVERSEAS OF THE
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ACT ADMINISTERED BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

III. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

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THIS CHRONOLOGY WAS BASED ON ALL AVAILABLE INFORMATION,
INCLUDING THE OECD WATCHMAN'S LOGS; ANOECD STANDARD
FIRE REPORT FORM; DCM KATZ'S REPORT, CLEARED BY
MR. KORP, THE FIRST USOECD OFFICIALS ON THE SCENE; AND
MY OWN RECOLLECTIONS. THESE DOCUMENTS ARE BEING
FORWARDED TO ALBRECHT, EUR/RPE. ALL TIMES IN THE

FOLLOWING CHRONOLOGY SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS APPROXIMATE.
WHAT FOLLOWS IS ONLY MY "BEST GUESS" AS OF TODAY OF
WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED:

2220 HOURS MARCH 1: FIRST ALARM WAS BY HEAT SENSOR
FROM CIRCUIT 63 AT USOECD RECEPTION AREA,
RECEIVED AT OECD CENTRAL GUARDPOST BY
MR. RAGO. GUARDPOST CALLS FIREMAN ON DUTY
VIA PAGEBOY.

2222: OECD DIRECT LINE WITH MARINE GUARDPOST LIGHTS

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UP AND RINGS; NO REPLY AT US DELEGATION.
OECD GUARD MR. RAGO DIALS OECD INTERNAL
LINE 9764 (AT RECEPTION AREA) AND GETS
BUSY SIGNAL. NEXT TRIES 9738 (DCM'S
OFFICE WHICH RINGS WITHOUT ANSWER.

2223: OECD FIREMAN ON DUTY, MR. GESBERG, ARRIVES
IN FRONT OF CLOSED DOOR TO U.S. DELEGA-
TION AND PERCEIVES FLAMES; JOINED BY
MR. TUZET, SECOND DUTY FIREMAN; NO REPLY AT
U.S. DELEGATION. MR. TUZET ASKS OECD GUARD-
POST FOR IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION BY FIRE
DEPARTMENT AND EVACUATION OF BUILDING.
MR. GESBERG BEGINS TO CHOP DOWN WOODEN
DOOR AND GLASS DOOR WITH HATCHET. THICK

BLACK SMOKE MADE THIS DIFFICULT.

2226: OECD CALLS FIRE DEPARTMENT AND RINGS GENERAL
FIRE ALARM HORNS.

2227: OECD EVACUATION ALARM, CIRCUIT 64, HEAT
SENSOR ILLUMINATED.

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ELECTRIC CLOCK IN THE MAIN CORRIDOR OF
U.S. DELEGATION STOPS.

2230: THE MARINE GUARD SGT. DISCH RECEIVES CALL
FROM SGT. ROMERO (PERHAPS FROM EXTENSION
IN THE SOUTHERN CORRIDOR). ACCORDING TO
DISCH, ROMERO ADVISED HIM OF FIRE WHICH WAS
PROBABLY STARTED BY "ONE OF THE RADIOS".
ROMERO SOUNDED EXCITED AND SAID HE "WASN'T
CERTAIN HE COULD GET OUT". HE SAID HE
WOULD TRY TO CALL THE FIREMEN FROM THE OECD
COMPLEX. SGT. DISCH SAID HE WOULD ALSO
NOTIFY THE FIREMEN AND TAKE APPROPRIATE
STEPS. THE MESSAGE WAS NOT COMPLETED AND
THE PHONE WAS LEFT OFF THE HOOK.

2230: ACCORDING TO FRENCH POLICE, TWO FRENCH
POLICEMEN FOUND BODY, LATER IDENTIFIED AS
THAT OF SGT. ROMERO, ON RUE ALFRED DEHODENCQ.

2231: SGT. DISCH CALLS EMBASSY OPERATOR WHO
TELEPHONES FIRE DEPARTMENT AND SGT. CORNWELL
TO REPORT TO MARINE GUARD OFFICE AS SOON
AS POSSIBLE. (EMB/OPR REPORTS CALL 2225.)

2233: FIRST DETACHMENT FROM FIRE DEPARTMENT
ARRIVES. FIREMEN, WITH RESPIRATORY DEVICES,
ENTER U.S. DELEGATION, UNABLE TO LOCATE
MARINE GUARD. RUN TWO FIREHOSES UP STAIR-
CASE NO. 3 AND TWO FIREHOSES UP MECHANICAL
LADDER AT 2 RUE ALFRED DEHODENCQ.

2233: BATTERY-DRIVEN CLOCK IN THE COUNSELOR'S
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OFFICE LOCATED HALFWAY DOWN SOUTHERN CORRI-

DOR STOPS AT 2236 (RUNNING FAST BY TWO TO THREE MINUTES).

2240: OECD'S MR. RAGO TRIES TO CALL VARIOUS OECD PERSONNEL (MESSRS. MEYER, BERLINE, LEFEVRE, LANGE).

2250: SGT. DISCH, HAVING DRIVEN TO OECD IN GUARD VAN, IS UNABLE TO OBTAIN MUCH INFORMATION. FINDS ENGLISH WOMAN TO INTERPRET FOR HIM SINCE HE DOES NOT SPEAK FRENCH. LATER JOINED BY SGTS. BRANDT AND MCGOUGH.

2315: SGTS. DISCH, BRANDT AND MCGOUGH GAIN ACCESS TO FIFTH FLOOR. STOPPED BY FIREMEN FROM ENTERING U.S. DELEGATION AREA.

2330: SY KASTENS ARRIVES.

2343: FRENCH POLICE OFFICER, MR. CHARPENTIER, CALLS EMBASSY OFFICE TO REPORT SGT. ROMERO'S BODY IS FOUND ON GROUND (NO LOCATION WAS

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MENTIONED.

2355: DCM KATZ ARRIVES.

2400: MINEF KORP ARRIVES. KATZ AND KORP VIEW BODY OF SGT. ROMERO. COMMISSAIRES IS AUTHORIZED BY KATZ AND EMBASSY SECURITY, WITH MR. BERLIN'S CONCURRENCE, TO PROCEED TO EXAMINE AND REMOVE THE BODY (BUT NOT TO UNDERTAKE AN AUTOPSY WITHOUT FURTHER SPECIFIC AUTHORIZATION). KATZ/KORP WALK THROUGH DAMAGED USOECD AREA (SEE KATZ/KORP REPORT).

0007 MARCH 2: FIRE EXTINGUISHED ACCORDING TO OECD REPORT.

0010: DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL WOOTTON ARRIVES.

0045: EMBASSY ADMINCOUNS BOUDREAU, MRS. SALZMAN AND I ARRIVE. MESSRS. BOUDREAU, KASTENS, KORP, AND I TOGETHER INSPECT THE ENTIRE AREA.

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BY FLASHLIGHT AND AN EMERGENCY LIGHT ERECTED BY THE FIREMEN IN THE CORRIDORS. DUE TO THE POOR LIGHTING, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO ASCERTAIN UNTIL DAYLIGHT THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE.

0100 (APPROXIMATELY): THE SENIOR FIRE OFFICIAL PRESENT SPECULATED THAT THERE HAD BEEN A FIRE OF TREMENDOUS HEAT WHICH HAD RAPIDLY TRAVELED THE LENGTH OF THE CORRIDOR, AT UPPER LEVEL UNDER CEILING WITH DIRECT BURN DAMAGE LARGELY IN THE RECEPTION AREA AND THE CORRIDORS. HE REMARKED HOW UNUSUAL IT WAS THAT THE FIRE HAD SPREAD SO MUCH LONGITUDINALLY ALONG THE CORRIDOR WITH LESS FIRE DAMAGE TO THE OFFICES OPENING OFF THE CORRIDOR, PARTICULARLY OFFICES WHERE THE DOORS TO THE CORRIDOR HAD BEEN CLOSED. THE MELTED PLASTIC, LIGHTING COVERS AND CHARRED WALL PANELS, PARTICULARLY WORKING FROM THE CEILING DOWNWARD, ATTESTED TO THE INTENSE HEAT THAT SEEMED TO HAVE ENTERED THE OFFICES FROM THE CORRIDOR AT OR JUST BELOW THE CEILING. THE GENERAL IMPRESSION, PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF THE HEAT SENSOR ALARM HAVING ORIGINATED FROM THE RECEPTION AREA, WAS THAT THE FIRE HAD STARTED THERE.

0120: SECRETARY GENERAL AND MRS. VAN LENNEP APPEAR AND ARE ESCORTED ON ANOTHER INSPECTION OF THE AREA. WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL WOOTTON,

I DISCUSS WITH VAN LENNEP AND OTHERS PRESENT
(DCM KATZ, MINEF KORP, ACOUNS BOUDREAU,
SECURITY OFFICER KASTENS) THE INITIAL CON-
CLUSIONS OF THE FIREMEN AND POLICE. FIRST,
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THE FIRE WAS APPARENTLY VERY HOT AND MOVED
VERY FAST. SECONDLY, THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL
OF SMOKE BUT VERY LITTLE FLAME. THIRDLY
(FROM THE COMMISSAIRE ON THE BASIS OF HIS
INITIAL EXAMINATION), SGT. ROMERO'S WEAPON
WAS HOLSTERED, LOADED AND UNFIRED. FINALLY,
THERE WAS NO IMMEDIATE EVIDENCE OF HOW THE
FIRE MAY HAVE STARTED. SECRETARY GENERAL
VAN LENNEP CONCURS IN ALL ACTIONS AND OFFERS

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ALL POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE. THE SECRETARY
GENERAL AND I AGREE IT ESSENTIAL TO HAVE A
COMPLETE INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION, ESPECIALLY
IN TERMS OF THE FIRE SAFETY OF ALL PERSONNEL.

0230: I LEAVE, WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT MESSRS.
BOUDREAU AND KASTENS ARE TO NOTIFY THE

DEPARTMENT OF THE FIRE AND THE MARINE CORPS
OF THE DEATH OF SGT. ROMERO AND TO REQUEST
NEXT OF KIN TO AUTHORIZE AN AUTOPSY.

0915: LAST FIRE DEPARTMENT SURVEILLANCE DETACHMENT
LEAVES.

LATER IN THE MORNING OF MARCH 2, EMBASSY SECURITY
CONJECTURED THAT SGT. ROMERO PROBABLY WAS ON PATROL AT
THE TIME THE FIRE BROKE OUT, BECAUSE WASTE-BASKET
INSPECTION APPEARED COMPLETED UP TO THE NORTH CORNER OF
THE AREA BUT NOT IN OFFICES ON THE SOUTHWEST CORNER.
THE FIRE MAY HAVE SPREAD TOO RAPIDLY FOR HIM TO GET OUT.
SGT. ROMERO FELL FROM A FAR SOUTHWEST CORNER WINDOW.
DEATH SAID TO HAVE BEEN INSTANTANEOUS AND THAT ROMERO
HAD DEEP LACERATION IN THE PALM OF ONE HAND, CAUSE OF
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHICH IS UNKNOWN. WE ARE AWAITING THE MEDICAL REPORT
AND THAT OF THE AUTOPSY ONCE PERMISSION HAS BEEN GRANTED,
FOR ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE ON SGT. ROMERO'S CONDITION.

THE KEY TO THE FIRE EXIT DOOR, SOME 50 FEET FROM THE
WINDOW FROM WHICH HE FELL WAS STILL IN THE KEY BOX. THE
KEY LOCK HAS SINCE BEEN REMOVED BY EMBASSY SECURITY.
SALZMAN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PARIS08159
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780103-0510
Format: TEL
From: PARIS USOECD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780398/aaaaderf.tel
Line Count: 740
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e9c532cc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 14
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 PARIS 8140, 78 PARIS 7589, 78 PARIS 7579, 78 PARIS 7571
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3417152
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OECD FIRE AND ITS AFTERMATH
TAGS: ASEC, OECD
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e9c532cc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014